

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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MEMORANDUM

November 30, 2020

To: Members of the Committee on Oversight and Reform

Fr: Majority Staff

Re: Remote Hearing on “Ensuring the 2020 Census Count is Complete and Accurate”

On **Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. ET**, the Committee will hold a remote hearing on addressing risks to the accuracy and completeness of the 2020 Census count. This hearing will be convened using WebEx, which has been approved by the House. Members are asked to connect by 9:30 a.m. to ensure their participation and troubleshoot any connectivity issues. The hearing will be recorded and livestreamed for the public.

I. HEARING BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Census Bureau has faced unique challenges in conducting a complete and accurate 2020 Census, including the coronavirus pandemic, the use of new technologies for enumeration, and compressed schedules for data collection and data processing.

Last week, the *New York Times* reported that “Census Bureau officials have concluded that they cannot produce the state population totals required to reallocate seats in the House of Representatives until after President Trump leaves office in January.” The report added: “the Census Bureau told the Commerce Department that a growing number of snags in the massive data-processing operation that generates population totals had delayed the completion of population calculations at least until Jan. 26, and perhaps to mid-February.”¹

After the story became public, the Census Bureau Director, Dr. Steven Dillingham, posted a statement confirming that “anomalies have been discovered” during data processing.²

Since none of these problems had been reported to the Committee, Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney sent a letter to the Census Bureau on November 19 seeking documents relating to these

¹ *Census Officials Say They Can’t Meet Trump’s Deadline for Population Count*, New York Times (Nov. 19, 2020) (online at www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/us/2020-census-data.html).

² U.S. Census Bureau, *Statement from Census Bureau Director Steve Dillingham* (Nov. 19, 2020) (online at www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/statement-post-collection-processing.html).

anomalies and the predicted delays they would cause. The Committee asked for these documents by November 24, 2020.³

No documents have been provided. On November 24—the date the documents were due to the Committee—staff received a bipartisan telephone briefing from the Census Director and other top Census Bureau officials. These officials reported that documents responsive to the Committee’s request had been submitted to Secretary Wilbur Ross’ General Counsel at the Commerce Department, but they have not been cleared for release and there were “concerns about ongoing litigation.” When asked whether the Bureau had an expected date by which production might be possible, the officials could not provide an estimated date.

II. WITNESSES

J. Christopher Mihm

Managing Director, Strategic Issues
Government Accountability Office

Robert Santos

Vice President and Chief Methodologist, Urban Institute
President-Elect, American Statistical Association

Joseph Salvo

Chief Demographer, Population Division
New York City Department of City Planning

Additional witnesses to be determined.

Staff contacts: Tori Anderson and Max Whitcomb at (202) 225-5051.

³ Letter from Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, to Director Steven Dillingham, U.S. Census Bureau (Nov. 19, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/committee-demands-documents-after-reports-that-career-census-experts-warned-that>).